OUTLAW

A LITERARY JOURNAL FOR RADICAL THINKERS

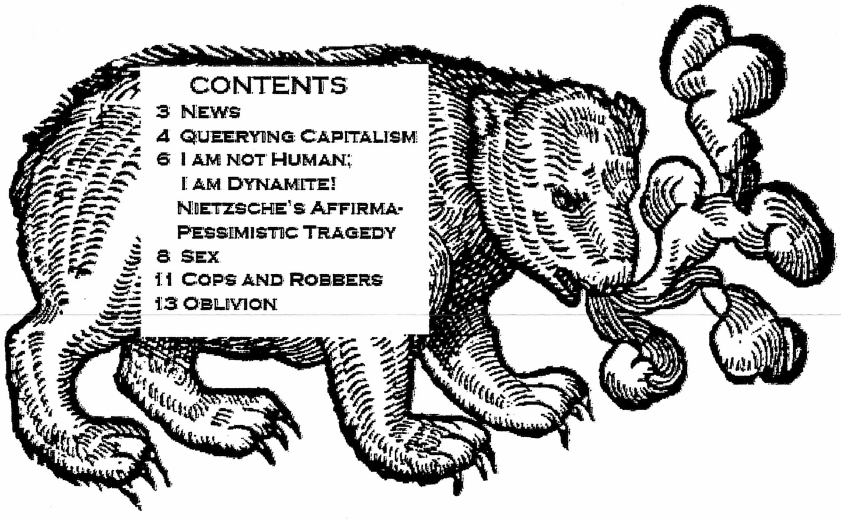
EDITORIAL, ISSUE ONE.

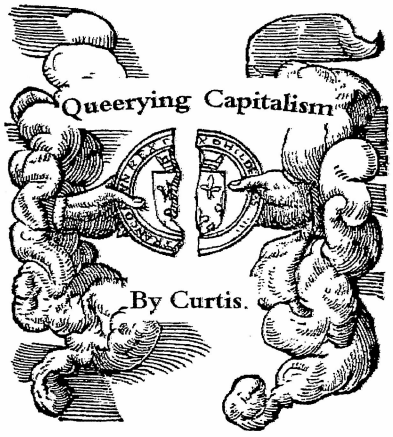
Outlaw aims to create a literary forum to build radical dissent, through the expression of critical ideas. We would like to develop a space to see our revolutionary ideas realised in print and readership, a space were we can maintain a creative freedom while learning from the works of others. We want to be proactive in encouraging this creativity and openness in thought. Outlaw; fugitives who continually resist all attempts to be contained. At this stage of our project, we remain vulnerable, but by supporting other Outlaws in the development of their own ideas we hope to see a strong community grow around this humble beginning. We are at a point where society has become divided and marginalized by the virtue of its ignorance towards itself. And so the question – how can we contribute to the construction of an educated community which helps others to learn about the cultural phenomena around them through self-publishing.

Not all of the pieces published here will be finished or refined, or possibly even thought through! Melbourne has a need for a truly radical journal. Outlaw can also be an arena for writers whose work might struggle to find a place in more thoroughly academic publications, but who continue to be actively engaged with radical ideas and politics. Our definition of radical literature reaches towards those who vitalize ideas through the (acceptably) naive and defiant gesture of experimentation, as well as by employing critical thinking. We want to make clear that although we hold a set of very definite positions in our own lives, we also wish to extend our subject matter to those things which extend beyond these positions, or advance them toward new ends. Our main focus, in these burning days of our youth, is that we identify as both anti-capitalist and anti-authoritarian. We see a system built upon collapse, upon the notion that all distances and definitions in culture may be collapsed into the quantification of mass capital.

What this means is that we seek to reopen these distances through the investigation of cultural and creative forms of writing. In this issue we have included a psychological thought-experiment, along with a short story, along with a single-concept analysis of Nietzsche, and a queer evaluation of capitalism. By exploring many areas of study in this journal, we hope to draw out what relates them together. More importantly we want to encourage freedom of expression. We believe that without a community of readers an expression of thought is only half finished. In terms of communication, the reader makes up an essential part of its success. Thus Outlaw is a space for us all to explore our freedoms of critique and discussion. Because of this we need to make clear that the opinions contained in Outlaw will not be endorsed as such by the editors, and nor should they be. Often it is through the experience of difference that the greatest developments emerge.

We would like to receive 2 page essay submissions on all topics. Our main focus has so far been conceived of as politics, philosophy, activism, art and literature. You can find more submission details on the backpage. If you enjoy reading this journal, then please take the initiative to become involved. Although Outlaw is run by an editorial body, the project itself can never be complete or finite, as our aim is to be continually expanding through the people involved in reading and writing its pages.
Mad Love to you all,
M. SKELTON
C. BLACK
A. SCHNEIDER





It always surprises me when I encounter homophobia in 'the left', even more so amongst the anti-capitalist or revolutionary left. Although blatant homophobia does exist in these spaces, more common is a sense of anything to do with sexuality being left for the queers to deal with, a 'not-my-issue' delegation. I'm not sure whether it is because gay and lesbian organising has traditionally been identity based and so people don't want to tread on autonomous toes, or if the links aren't made between capitalism and the construction of sexuality, both hetero and homo. I'm certainly not trying to say that non-queer identifying people don't challenge these things in other ways, or that all queers are blazing a revolutionary path, but that issues of sexuality are something that effect everyone and a queer analysis of capitalism and an anticapitalist analysis of queer reveals them to be intrinsically linked struggles and perhaps gives hope for a more holistic approach.

If we are to build radical communities that can challenge capitalism, a good place to start seems to be the way it structures our most intimate relationships. Prior to the mid-nineteenth century, there was no such thing as a homosexual person. Sure, people were persecuted for homosexual *acts*, but sodomy was a crime that included a huge range of things including heterosexual anal intercourse, oral sex, bestiality and masturbation, to name a few. It wasn't until the medicalisation of homosexuality, which tried to link the desire to commit homosexual acts with physiological and psychological characteristics, that a distinct and identifiable type of person – 'the homosexual' was created. In response to this the heterosexual was also born, the word itself not used until the early 20th century. The intense focus on homosexuality came at the same time as similar crackdowns on prostitution and other forms of 'deviancy'. Industrial capitalism allowed people to move away from household economies and small towns that may have restricted their ability to engage in homosexual acts, and a moral panic ensued as the cities were seen to be a breeding ground for immorality. This in turn allowed the nuclear family to be painted as a safe haven of good morals, and now that work and home occurred in separate spheres, the home became a place where the working man could get his fix of tender loving care. Women's unpaid labour not only produced the next round of workers for capitalism, but ensured the physical and moral wellbeing of the current lot. It's a lot more complicated (and interesting) than this brief rundown, but the point I'm trying to make is that homosexuality and heterosexuality are not essentialised, binary categories. Their construction is a result of, and beneficial to, capitalism.

In response to being persecuted on the basis of this constructed sexual identity, a claiming of that identity led to the gay liberation movement seeking rights on the basis of that identity. Now I certainly don't want to imply that homophobia doesn't exist – it does. People are oppressed on the basis of who they have sex with. But that is a weird thing to be the basis for political identification. John Weir expresses his contempt for Gay Liberation arguing that 'mainstream gay identity' is not mainstream at all but representative of a privileged minority, mostly white men who "crave what they were promised as children, but denied as adults because of their sexuality; they want their guaranteed access to power."[1] He claims that if 'mainstream' means 'majority' then the 'mainstream' of homosexuality is in the Marines, or straight guys who sleep with other men, or "living at home with Mom and Dad"[2]. In her book "queer theory" Annamarie Jagose claims that "while there is a certain population of men and women who may be described more or less unproblematically as homosexual, a number of ambiguous circumstances cast doubt on the precise delimitations of homosexuality as a descriptive category"[3]

Even the term 'same-sex' is a product of a binary understanding of sexuality. There is a vast and diverse spectrum of gender expression and sexual desire, and queer theorist Eve Sedgwick explains this:
"It is a rather amazing fact that, of the very many dimensions along which the genital activity of one person can be differentiated from that of another [...] precisely one, the gender of object choice, emerged from the turn of the century, and has remained, as *the* dimension denoted by the now ubiquitous category of 'sexual orientation'"[4]

Although it's the poster child for queer rights at the moment, gay marriage isn't the only issue that directly affects queers. Unfortunately, it sets up a discourse for queer activism that only cares about individual rights and not community and is based in the quest for economic and social 'equality' in a system that is structured to benefit heterosexuality, it also fails to recognise issues such as race and class and the way that these things interact with issues of sexuality. The way we struggle for liberation can have some nasty side effects, and we need to make sure our strategically reformist goals are strategic enough, and do not

[1] Weir, John, "Going In", in *Anti-Gay*, London and New York:Freedom Editions (1996) p34
[2] ibid
[3] Jagose, Annamarie "queer theory", (1996) p7
[4] Eve Sedgwick quoted in ibid p64

Got News to share? Send it to outlaw@riseup.net

The Melbourne Model

The University of Melbourne is currently undergoing a transition to a new model of higher education, ostensibly a benign pedagogical shift to 6 generalist undergraduate degrees which articulate into graduate programs and make Melbourne graduates more internationally competitive. However students have responded angrily to the model which brings with it huge equity and access issues as well as concerns over quality of education both with the 'teach out' of old degrees and the content of new degrees. If you're not at Melbourne, don't feel too safe. There are moves across Australia to cut out unprofitable areas of study and exclude students and teaching staff from the decision making process, putting control solely in the hands of the university's bureaucrats and external consultants whose concern is not with education, but marketability. The new model is endorsed by both the federal government and the ALP, and compliments the increasing shift towards privitisation and corporatisation of the higher education sector.

Picking apart the different aspects of the model is an endless and ultimately useless task. Issues of faculty debt, subject cancellation, bribe money presented as scholarships and inequitable distribution of CSP places have been framed by the media and the University as peripheral issues quite separate to the pedagogical core of the model. It's become clear that we can't separate implementation from pedagogy. The problems described above reflect not merely poor implementation, but the driving principle of the Melbourne Model. The 'pedagogical model' does not exist in a vacuum – the reality is, students can't afford to study for longer, or face a greater chance of being hit with full fees. For the University to implement the 'Melbourne model' at a time when it is increasingly difficult to access and engage in tertiary study shows contempt for the realities of student experience. At its core, The Melbourne Model is about prioritising the elitist façade of the university over accessible and quality education and research.

This was obvious at the May meeting of the Planning and Budget Committee. The cost of full fee undergrad and postgrad places will escalate in 2008, by between five and fifty percent. The primary reason given was that Sydney Uni is closing the gap on the Melbourne's "premium pricing position". Raising fees is rationalised by the need to "appropriately communicate the university's position as the top educational provider in Australia".

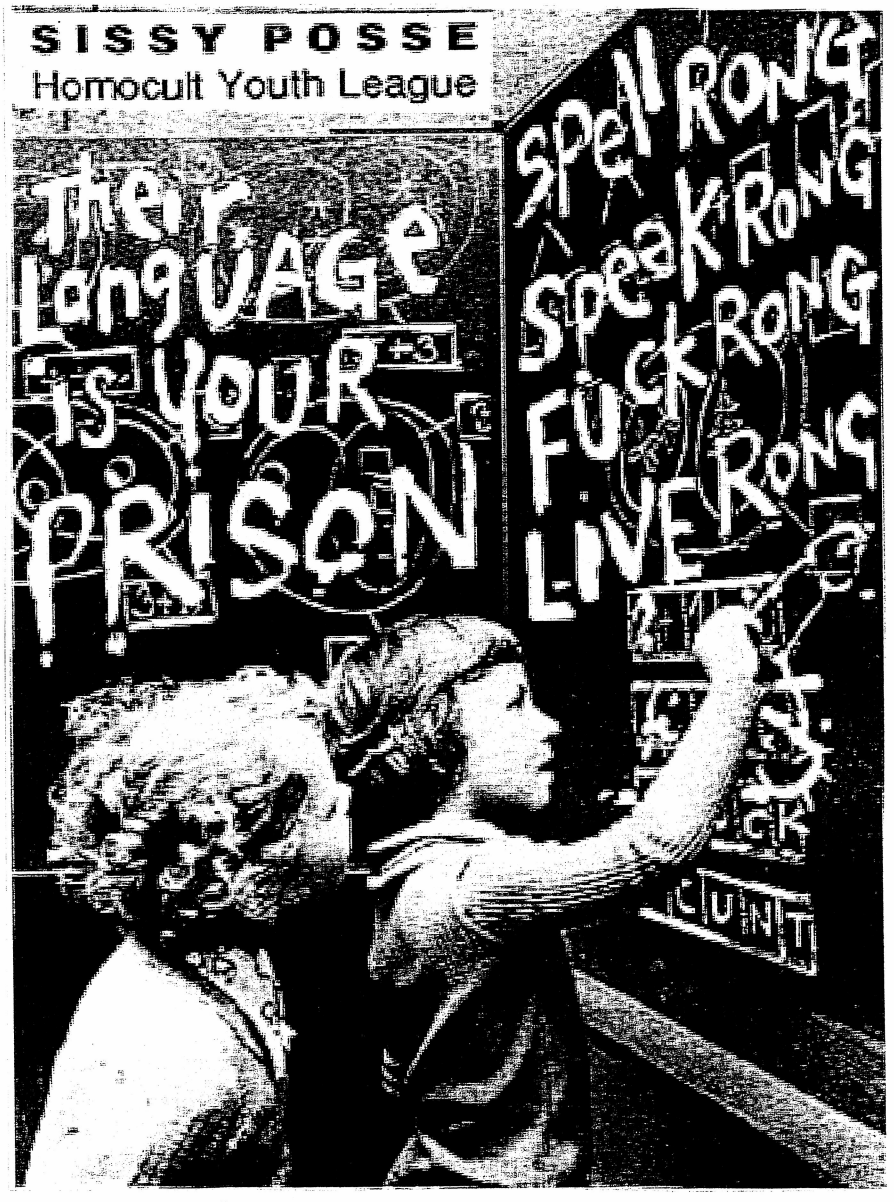
Over $1million will be spent on the Dreamlarge advertising campaign which exploits decontextualised images of 'world trouble spots' to promote Melbourne Uni as the key to a 'better world'. Meanwhile the Arts Faculty is unable to replace staff who leave or accept one of the many redundancies offered, because of a multi-million dollar deficit. Already we have seen moves by the University to cut unprofitable (and threatening?) areas of study such as gender studies and social theory. When students and staff attempted to engage in this process and suggest ways to make gender studies a viable program, the working group responsible was dissolved. When over 100 students protested outside Academic Board, the response from inside was to shut the windows and the shutters, and pretend it wasn't happening. Similarly, the successful blockade of the Uni's launch dinner was met with threats to cut off student access to university committees.

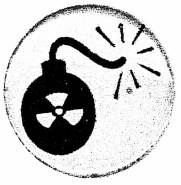
The Melbourne Model is about much more than the 3+2 degree structure - its about deprioritising education and community for the sake of a bigger market share. For further info get in touch with the University of Melbourne Student Union www.union.unimelb.edu.au or contact president@union.unimelb.edu.au

simply lead to assimilation. For example, the fight to decriminalise homosexuality was pursued in a way that further shifted sexuality into the private sphere, a 'what I do in my bedroom is none of your business' kind of deal. This has the negative effect of opening up greater persecution of public expressions of sexuality and also allows people to be blamed for their experiences of homophobia because their queerness is too visible.

Instead of working to promote homosexuality from the category of deviant bad boy slacker to good upstanding citizen within the existing framework of a binary system of sexuality, it is more productive to problematize the existence of these two distinct and essentialised categories in the first place. We should attack heteronormativity, (the privileging of heterosexuality as 'normal', 'natural', 'productive' and therefore the 'othering' of homosexuality as 'different', 'unnatural', 'unproductive or wasteful') as the root of queer oppression so that we are able to move forward in a way that does not accept the status quo as the best we can hope to get. It would be a mistake to simply try and shift the lines of 'acceptable gayness' thereby further disenfranchising those who can't, or don't want to be incorporated into the social structures of capitalism. It also allows the struggle to be taken up by those who are excluded from identity-based organising and a greater potential for the critical analysis of the category of heterosexuality.

However, an acknowledgement that capitalism is the root cause of these kinds of inequalities and oppression, does not mean that we should defer any kind of struggle around sexuality until after a revolution. A 'queerying' of capitalism allows an examination of the ways capitalism influences our most intimate lives and desires. We are prevented from building strong communities because of the alienation and individualisation of capitalist modes of relation, such as the nuclear family and monogamy. Taking on a queer analysis does not mean you need to pair up homo stylez or feel guilt over heterosexual desire, but instead acknowledge that there is a vast spectrum of sexual desire and gender expression which does not fit into a binary. The repression of our desires that don't fit into the box we have assigned ourselves, socialises us to submit to other forms of repression such as wage labour and prevents us from forming communities that challenge capitalism. We should interrogate our own internalisation of capitalist modes of relating and work to free ourselves of them in order to build strong communities in struggle.





I AM NOT HUMAN; I AM DYNAMITE!

Nietzsche's Affirma-Pessimistic Tragedy

What is the greatest thing you can experience? It is the hour of your greatest contempt. The hour in which even your happiness becomes loathsome to you, and so also your reason and virtue.

The hour when you say: What good is my happiness? It is poverty and filth and wretched contentment. But my happiness should justify existence itself!

The hour when you say: What good is my reason? Does it long for knowledge as the lion for his prey? It is poverty and filth and wretched contentment!

The hour when you say: What good is my virtue? It has not yet driven me mad! How weary I am of my good and my evil! It is all poverty and filth and wretched contentment!

The hour when you say: What good is my justice? I do not see that I am filled with fire and burning coals. But the just are filled with fire and burning coals!

The hour when you say: What good is my pity? Is not pity the cross on which he is nailed who loves man? But my pity is no crucifixion!

Have you ever spoken like this? Have you ever cried like this? Ah! If only I had heard you cry this way!

Zarathustra's Prologue, 3
Thus Spoke Zarathustra

When assessing what Nietzsche means in regard to concepts, it is imperative to note the multivalent, developmental nature of his project in regard to the way in which certain of his concepts evolve, transform and develop in their vying for ascendency. In its persistent recurrence, Nietzsche's tragic conception – and its invention, miracle, and genealogy – figures as a fundamental of his thought and is therefore subject to multitudinous growths and increases in dimension. Nietzsche's tragedy emerges from this fertile garden of thought as the miraculous invention of affirmation *through* pessimism: a painful, sensual and abundant reflex of the spirit whose *Hellenic invention* does not pertain solely to the *Greeks*.

The terms Apollonian and Dionysian, Nietzsche tells us in *The Birth of Tragedy*, "we *borrow* from the Greeks." The two deities are representative of antagonistic, supra-personal forces of art that "continually incite one another to new and more powerful births."

Apollo, the god of the *mores* (law), of healing, dreams, prophecy and light, is upheld as the imagistic god – the form of art where his strongest influence is felt is therefore in the plasiticist, representational forms of sculpture and epic poetry. Dionysus, the god of wine and drunkenness, of rapture, orgy, reactive sensuality and physical communication, is upheld as the deity of non-imagistic art – forms of art whereby one must transcend oneself into universal characters, such as acting, dancing and the *dithyramb*.

The musical expression of a predominantly Apollonian art-form is the *paean*, a monodic song (in both senses of being sung at funerals and pertaining to the singularity of its expression) accompanied by the *kithara*; the musical expression of a predominantly Dionysian art-form is the *dithyramb*, sung by dancing circles of men and boys in concurrence, accompanied by the vicissitudes and freedoms of the *aulos*.

Dionysus: transgressive, unitive, supra-personal, irresistible, violent, sensual.
Apollo: particularising, precise, illuminative, coherent, beautiful, limitable.

Here it is imperative to note, in the interests of *sophrosyne* and faithfulness to what Nietzsche *means,* the thinker's warnings on the perception of opposites. Nietzsche states that one generally inaccurate mode of perceiving regards everything in nature as a set of opposites, where in fact there are no binary contrarieties, but multitudinous variegations of degree. As Gilles Deleuze

puts it, the relation of one force to another is never conceived of by Nietzsche as a negative element in the essence; "in its relation with the other [a force] does not deny the other or that which it is not, it affirms its own difference and enjoys this difference" – thus speaks ascendency and the will to power, thus speaks *form*!

It would be error to conceive of the natural impulses of the Apollonian and Dionysian as irreconcilable contradiction, or as two pure elements that come into conflict. All acts of art, Nietzsche confirms, are born out of *both* Dionysian and Apollonian intoxication – where intoxication is felt as a feeling of plentitude and increased vitality by which "one gives to things and *compels them to take... "!*

Situated as it is within the history of a philology that had for so long viewed the Ancient Greeks as a cheerful and naive people, Nietzsche's vision of the pessimistic Hellenes come as a shatteringly untimely one. As is asserted early on in *The Birth of Tragedy*, the Hellenic Greeks were proficient in the dreadful knowledge handed down through folklore, and expressed by Sophocles through the voice of Silenus: that as "children of chance and misery" what is best of all is "not to be born, not to *be*, to be *nothing*", and the second best is "to die soon". With regard to "that overwhelming dismay" felt "in the face of the titanic powers of nature", the Greek knew and understood the dread suffering integral to all existence.

In *Human, All Too Human*, Nietzsche contends that the dread of gross misfortune may be overcome in two ways: either, one removes the cause of the misfortune, or, one re-evaluates their position towards it. In this framework, tragedy arises from the pessimist who – as he lacks the recourse to meaningful causality in regard to his suffering – creates a narcotic art that extracts pleasure in pain or emotion generally in order that man not "bleed to death from the truth he has recognised". Hence, as the Athenian "middle-world" of art draws a veil over the "terror and horror of existence", so the metaphysical miracle of tragedy transforms the subject into an artist, released from his individual will into the rapture of appearance, "for it is only as an *aesthetic phenomenon* that existence and the world are eternally *justified*". Indeed, tragedy is even "a necessary potion to recover" from war. Thus the embryonic conception of pessimistic wisdom in regard to tragedy – a wisdom that asserts the life of the individual is inconsequential in the face of the titanic forces of nature – is attributed a negative quality, as something to be overcome through aesthetic justification.

However, rather than withdraw his artistic approach to life within itself as escapist delusion, an *aesthetic justification* of life; an *escape* from the suffering caused by pessimistic wisdom, - tragedy does not reach it's final metamorphosis under Nietzsche's propagation until it denotes a disposition whereby life and becoming are *affirmed through pessimism.*

Nietzsche revises the cathartic element of tragedy, stating that through Greek Tragedy, the Hellene doesn't attempt to "purify himself of a dangerous emotion through its vehement discharge" – the tragic will goes "beyond pity and terror to experience a joy in becoming that *includes* joy in destruction" *as its necessary correlative*. The pattern of destruction and creation is unalterable and must be born; "the Dionysian 'yes' is a decision to value the future over the present." Indeed, the Hellenic pessimism wherein tragedy has its genesis is principally a "pessimism of strength" – the opposite of the degenerative, decadent and weak incarnation of pessimism as it was once discovered in India and now can be perceived amongst "so-called 'modern men' and Europeans". In this respect the subterraneus of *The Birth of Tragedy* is unearthed in a fresh luminance, and we may perceive even here the sub-audible rumblings of Nietzsche's affirmative pessimism in his assertions of "an exuberant, triumphant life in which all things, good or evil, are deified."

Indeed, to acknowledge Dionysus through tragedy is to at once acknowledge the eternal substratum of all existence, the eternally becoming will, it's eternity, its plentitude, its magnificence, and oneself as an expression of this will – but it is conversely to apprehend the pain at one's individuated severance from it. As Nietzsche states, the "triumphant Yes" of the tragic Hellene was the promise of a continuation of life and change beyond death through the collective act of procreation. Through affirmative pessimism, wherein one acknowledges and affirms every manifestation of the pain of becoming and of the limitations of individuation within this schema, the Zarathustrian tragic figure enters into a *symmarchia* with life; a sort of exchange. Hence in *Twilight of the Idols*, Nietzsche states that "the most spiritual human beings experience by far the most painful tragedies; but it is precisely for this reason that they honour life, because it brings against them its most formidable weapons." Thus for Nietzsche, the invention of tragedy means, in the Zarathustrian sense, the *befriending* of life: whereby, "in your friend you possess your best enemy... your heart should feel closest to him when you oppose him."

Nietzsche's greatest power is to invigorate the realm of thought, instilling new momentum and flux into the past to bring forth ideas for the future. Therefore one cannot simply view the course of ideas, within and without Nietzsche's role as genealogical obstetrician, as static, immutable phenomena. The invention of tragedy is something of the past, in that the Hellenic will provided its genesis; something of his present in that Nietzsche worked in harmony with the ancient Greek artworld to foreground it in sharp-relief; and, pre-eminently, the invention of tragedy is something of the future, something that must be reborn and reinvigorated: the invention of tragedy is a *cooperative* effort of protension and retention upon the stage of thought. Honour life that it brings against you its most formidable weapons! FORTH!

Jasper Garner Gore

This piece was originally composed for the Machine of Death anthology, a series of short stories circling a machine that predicts, via a simple blood test, the exact means by which one will die. Of course, that's all it gives, and apparently the machine, like the oracle of old, delights in ironic twists. Does the prediction 'OLD AGE' mean dying at 98, or being gunned down by a retiree with a shotgun? For more information: www.machineofdeath.net

"Whatever limits us, we call Fate."
Ralph Waldo Emerson

Phil was getting drunk. The blood he'd given to the machine had lowered his alcohol tolerance.
"It's not cool, man! It's not cool. I'm really goddamned freaked out by this," he said. Jackson snorted.
"Phil. Seriously. It's not that bad. Actually, as predictions, go it's pretty good. I mean, Jesus. Think about how many people actually *want* to go that way."
"But…"
"At least it isn't going to be painful. And there are no goddamn animals."
"But Jackson, *your* prediction's awesome. I mean, you've gotta be curious..."
"Not really."
The bar was filling up as more students finished their last classes for the day.
Jackson sighed.
"I just think it's shitty that the university requires that we get it done. It's not like it helps them avoid litigation anyway, right? If someone's going to die here, then they're going to die here. Nothing anyone can do."
Phil looked up.
"You believe that?"
"It doesn't matter what I believe – I've got the order of service right here." He nodded to the sliver of paper on the table that read: CRUSHED BY HERD OF WILDEBEEST.
"Anyway," continued Jackson, "the results are supposed to be confidential. So I'm getting rid of this goddamn paper and I'm going to try and forget what I learned here today."
Phil considered this, and shrugged.
"Well, at least you know that you're going to Africa."
Jackson raised an eyebrow.
"At least you know that you're not going to die a virgin."

* * *

Samantha was shaking as she put on her pants.
"Were you going to tell me? Huh? Did it even *occur* to you to tell me?"
Phil tried to take her arm. She threw him off and kept dressing.
"Look, Sam, what's the big deal? It's not like it said 'with your girlfriend on your nineteenth birthday'. It could be anyone, anytime! Jesus!"
Samantha dropped her shirt and spun around.
"I deserved to know, Phil! I deserved to know what might happen!"
"Actually, you didn't. It's goddamn confidential. You shouldn't have been rifling through my pants *anyway*."
"I was looking for cigarettes!"
"Bullshit."
"I was! But you should have told me, Phil. I can't believe you didn't tell me."
"Okay. Fine. So tell me yours."
"It doesn't matter."
"Really."
"It has nothing to do with you."
"*How do you know?* Shit, you don't know that any more than you know that mine has anything to do with *you*!"

"Mine has *nothing* to do with you! But I can't be expected to go to bed with a guy knowing that every time I do I might kill him! Every time might be the time…"
Her shoulders slumped a little. She righted herself.
"It's not fair. I can't deal with it. I shouldn't have to deal with it. You should have told me. I'm sorry Phil but… you should have told me."
And she put on her shirt and walked out.
Phil waited until he heard the door downstairs slam. Then he swore, loudly, and punched a hole in his wall. He'd been so *close*.

* * *

Shirley, Phil's secretary, winked at him and jumped off his desk.
"They're waiting for you, Phil. Good luck."
Phil smiled at her, straightened his tie, took a deep breath, and walked into the boardroom.
"Mr. Lias. Please, take a seat."
The partners were arranged around him in formation. Black suits, black ties, sharp looks.
"Firstly, you've been with the firm now for three years, and we all just want you to know that your commitment has been appreciated. That we are seriously considering making you a full partner."
Phil hadn't breathed once since he walked in.
"Your ability as a solicitor really isn't in any question, and your discretion with several of our more sensitive clients has been commendable. There's really only one thing in doubt, Mr. Lias."
The woman at the head of the table leaned forward.
"Now, we can't request this officially, of course it's illegal. But it's something of a convention for prospective partners to reveal any information regarding their eventual demise to the firm. I believe you underwent the test at college, yes?"
Phil went pale.
"The firm needs to be covered, Mr. Lias. And while you are the favourite for the position, I should warn you that there are other contenders who have already furnished us with their predictions."
Phil looked down. He opened his briefcase, and removed a sliver of paper. Wordlessly, he slid it down the table to the partners.
They leaned in, looked at it, and leaned back out again.
"Ah, I see, Mr. Lias."
Phil said nothing.
"This changes things entirely."
Phil swallowed.
"This puts us in a difficult position, Mr. Lias. You're a highly competent lawyer, but the firm really can't deal with this kind of embarrassment. I'm sorry."
Phil nodded.
"If you discreetly withdraw from the firm you will be well compensated of course. I think our business here is concluded. Good day."
Phil's secretary didn't even look at him as he packed his things into a cardboard box. Without even asking her, he cancelled their reservations at *LaChamp* on Friday.

* * *

Phil stared blankly at the pimp.
"You can't be serious."
"Sorry man, but I've gotta look after my girls. They find out I've been hooking them up with a dead man fucking, *I'm* going to be all kinds of screwed. Plus, there's no way I'd be able to collect my insurance."
"*You have insurance*?"
"Sure, man. You don't? Seriously, though, get moving, man. There isn't anything for you here, and I doubt you'll have better luck with anyone else in the district."
Phil couldn't believe it was standard practice now to be asked for this information. And he was trying to imagine how on earth the pimp had insurance.
"Listen, I can pay you *very* well."
"Yeah? And when you die I'll end up in a *very* expensive cell. Beat it man, nothing for you here."
"You can't do this, it's ridiculous. You don't *know* that…"
"Hey! Tony! Give me a hand here!"
"Wait, this really isn't necessary…"
Phil woke up three hours later without his wallet, or shoes, still forty-eight years old, and, still a virgin.

* * *

Phil was wondering what to type next. TheDarkOne had just asked him if they could meet. He'd been talking with her(?) online now for about a month. He was certainly tempted.

TheDarkOne: its just so terrible the way uve been discriminated against
PhiLias: your telling me! so are u sure u want to meet?
TheDarkOne: yeah! u sound great! i can get down to ur city next weekend if thats okay…
PhiLias: well its just, this is kind of embarrassing but ive never actually…
TheDarkOne:: thats okay! dont worry about it! ill be gentle i promise ;)
PhiLias: well thats a relief!
TheDarkOne: just one thing
PhiLias: sure
TheDarkOne: ur sure about the prediction, right?
PhiLias: sure im sure, why?
TheDarkOne: thats how ur going to die? for real?
PhiLias: well, yeah.
TheDarkOne: great. awesome. how do u feel about cameras?
PhiLias: what?
TheDarkOne: make the experience memorable! i mean, if it happens, just in case.

Phil stared blankly at the screen.

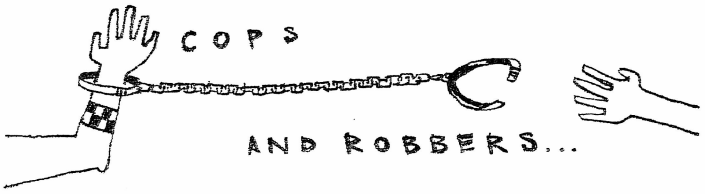
TheDarkOne: hello? phil? come on! itll be awesome.

Phil turned off his computer.

* * *

"I'll bet you've had sex," snarled Phil at the bartender, who ignored him.
"And you. And you. Everyone here's had sex but me. It's goddamn disgraceful."
Phil took another pull of his drink. He was starting to get drunk. Again.
"It's not right. I lost the girl and the job. Couldn't even get a look in at a damn brothel. The only people who would sleep with me are goddamn internet psychopaths."
No one, to Phil's knowledge, was actually listening.
"And why? Because some goddamn piece of paper told me that I was a goddamn liability in bed when I was eighteen years old. It's goddamn disgraceful." No one spoke.
"It ain't so bad." Croaked a voice, finally, from down the end of the bar.
"What the hell'd you know?"
The old woman shrugged.
"Got th'same prediction. Got it when I was ten."
Phil shut up. The woman continued.
"Figured pretty quick that it was going to be a problem. So I just didn't have sex. Travelled around. Wrote books. Met the Pope. Dalai Llama too. They got it."
Phil gaped.
"You're a virgin too?" he said finally.
"I suppose so."
"Barkeep," said Phil, "Get a drink for my friend here."
The old woman and the old man locked eyes. She smiled.
"Why sir? Are you propositioning me?"
Phil smiled back. She laughed and looked away. Then:
"Sorry friend, you're out of luck." She drained her whiskey and stood.
"I'm not done yet," she continued, "plenty left to do." Phil was stunned.
"You've got to be older than I am," he managed.
"Sure."
"And you don't care that you've missed out? Your whole life?"
"Well, there's plenty of other stuff to do you know. I'm going to Bhutan next week." She turned to leave. Phil slammed his fist down on the bar.
"Goddamnit!" he screamed, "this goddamn prediction *can't* come true! I can't damn well die having sex *if I never have it!*"
The woman stopped.
"Are you sure that it was *having* sex, that was going to kill you?"
Phil stared at her.

"What the hell do you mean?"
"Oh, nothing." And she left. And there was the sound of a braying wildebeest outside, and a soft cry on the wind as she closed the door. Phil nursed his drink.
"Women," he said finally, "what the hell. What the goddamn hell."



This article was submitted by an individual, speaking on their own behalf, who took part in the Arterial Block action late last year, and who would prefer to remain anonymous!

At the G20 protest in November last year the affinity group Arterial Bloc rejected a model of non-violent direct action and engaged in militant clashes with the police. The result of the violence was limited, almost entirely, to a small amount of damage to police property and some minor injuries on both sides. Over thirty people have since been arrested. The response by the state was predictable.

In recent history the police have come down hard on protestors who cross their lines. When the death in custody of aboriginal man Mulrunji Doomadgee sparked riots on Palm Island last year, police swarmed in and arrested over twenty people suspected of property damage.

The police, the government and the media (especially the Herald Sun) condemn militant protestors by saying that Australia is a pluralist democracy in which violence is not used as a political tool. That is what John Howard means when he calls protestors "unrepresentative hooligans." Nothing could be less democratic!

The problem is of course that we do not live in a democratic society. What do the police, the government and the Herald Sun all have in common? They are all owned by the rich. Indirectly, or directly, the capitalist class wields power in Australia. They rule via the private ownership of social product; every industry, every company and subsequently every government and governing institution. They literally own every major newspaper in the country.

It isn't just that capitalism pervades every democratic institution we have. We only vote once every three years, to elect those who will wield power over a pitiful portion of the economy. The rest remains a dictatorship by private capital. "But we live in a pluralist democracy" – try that one next time you're temping at a call centre and your boss wants you to take that extra shift. Good luck!

"But we have it a lot better in Australia than in other countries." Exactly! That's why we should use the power we have here, in the belly of the beast. Capitalism is global; it doesn't end where our representative forms of government do. How do the people of West Papua feel about Australian democracy when it is Australian capital which condemns them to dictatorship under Indonesian rule? The infamous Freeport mine West Papua pays its dividends to Australian investors, the 'cost' is the oppression of the West Papuans by the Indonesian government. That is the kind of "regional cooperation" and economic rationalism to expect from the Australian government and the G20.

The question of violence is therefore enormously misleading. It assumes that capital does not already use violence against its 'citizens.' We should reject this logic and become militant against capitalism. Confronting the most undemocratic institutions in society will not undermine democracy. If we lift our eyes for a moment from the theatre of false democracy, we see the gross contradictions imposed by private capital and imperialism. Militancy in such circumstances is justifiable. It is entirely appropriate to attack the G20 and the internal army that defends it.

To say as much does not undermine the responsibility inherent in each of us to the rest of society. Anarchy in the streets scares the shit out of a lot people but it shouldn't. All it represents is the autonomy and free federation of different groups and individuals acting out against capitalism, each contributes in their own way without controlling the other. The only people who should be scared are those who would like to monopolize the message being sent out to 'the public' by a demonstration.

Whether it is pacifism, Marxism or reformism – nobody has that right. The autonomy to act in a more militant fashion should be asserted. It is both morally justified and democratic, and it is tactical.

Many of these groups attack the more militant protestors by saying they are "alienating the Australian public." They forget that the public is not so apathetic. It is precisely this type of reasoning that ends up containing dissent and circumventing the growth of popular movement.

It is only four years now since the public were themselves out on the streets in huge numbers demanding that Australia not go to war in Iraq. It was obvious at that moment that we do not live in democracy. The government did not do what the Australian people wanted. The government tested the strength of the movement and did what it wanted regardless of public opinion. That was not apathy on behalf of the public; it was deliberate disenfranchisement by the government.

For the government, public opinion is something to be maintained but not respected and given its proper place. The government has its own agenda. What is right wing, and often popular, is portrayed as a mandate (persecution of refugees, the criminalization of dissent). What is right wing and unpopular (War, "work choices," or the destruction of unionism) is imposed. In other words, in this false democracy state domination over an individual masquerades as society's democratic right! And any real democracy, over our social product, remains under dictatorship! Not surprisingly, there is an authoritarian link between these conservative and capitalist positions. The so called right of the majority to oppress the minority, is in practice the dictatorship of the capitalist class over the majority of society.

Therefore, everyone should defend the G20 arrestees and the right of individual dissent.

What is being suppressed by the police, the courts and the government, is not a violent threat to the state, nor is it even a large social movement at this stage, it is an idea of resistance, a change in tactics. There is no better evidence to support the tactic of militancy than the response by the state to try to squash just the idea of it. Even the largely symbolic act of dinting a cop van or breaching a barricade is too much of a threat. The government knows what will happen if these tactics were ever taken up by a large social movement. That movement would be successful, it would threaten the government and the undemocratic forces in our society and it would win.

It is inevitable that circumstances provoking popular resistance will repeat themselves, especially with Howard running the show. At such moments social movements become so popular that they overcome the undemocratic forces in society; the government, private capital, controlled media, the millions of dollars spent to demobilize protestors and take them to rock concerts instead...

But eventually we will need a change in the political culture of resistance if we are to overcome the violence of the state. We need to move towards future struggles retaining the threat of violence against the state or we will always lose. This is a tactical position, one that says the best way to advance the radical argument is not to present a watered down program, or to attempt to 'lead' the public through dishonest representation. It is to be an autonomous group and to act on behalf of yourselves.

Did Arterial Bloc represent the Australian 'public', the West Papuans, or Iraqis? No! We can each represent ourselves, with our own autonomy, our own reasoning and our responsibility to influence and respect each other. I support other groups with different tactics in the aim of a common cause. I took part in the Arterial Bloc action based on the logic outlined above; I hope you can come up with a better idea.

OBLIVION

© By Dr. N. Bowyer

I have a thought experiment for you.

Let's presume we have nothing to worry about.

Really think about it…

We *actually* have *nothing* to worry about.

Perhaps I should begin with a qualifier. If thought experiments aren't your sort of thing, I'm inclined to suggest you don't bother going any further. If they're not, and you do, you're probably wasting my time and you'll certainly be wasting yours. Only read this stuff if you're inclined to think deeply about things and are confident you have a vivid imagination. Only read this stuff if you don't mind thinking about something you really might not want to think about. And only read this stuff if you're actually going to think about it. Don't act on it, mind you. It's just a thought experiment. Just *think* about it. And I mean *really*, *really* think about it...

What if there's nothing to worry about?

What if there comes a time when you cease to exist? When that happens, everything that ever mattered to you ceases to exist too. Whether it goes on after you is irrelevant. As far as you're concerned, it ceases to exist. And as far as you're concerned, that's all that counts. It's all gone. Everything is gone. There is nothing fucking left. Everything that means or ever meant anything to you … it all amounts to nothing.

What if oblivion is a fact?

Maybe you already think it is. But if you do, you need to think about it more. Maybe you think it's a fact that it isn't. Again, you're missing the point. I'm referring to a *fact*. A true fact. An absolute fact. We don't know any of those. And if you're sure we do, there's no point in you engaging in the thought experiment…

Agnostics might be pussies. But they're also smart ones. And uncertainty is their saving grace. I, for one, will be enjoying it for as long as I can, because it means that everything might make sense, that I might go on forever, and that things might get better. And you can't convince me that I'm wrong, because if the purest form of realism is undemonstrable and irrefutable, and absolute idealism the same – if we can't prove that reality exists any more than we can prove that it doesn't – anything is possible and it's all fair game. Thank God for uncertainty, because it means that you can't tell me that I'm wrong for thanking God. Uncertainty is my religion, and my perception its only truth.

But what if I let go of that uncertainty? What if I accept the assumption of imminent oblivion? Of my life and perception culminating in nothing more than their utter cessation? It's the principal fear. The ultimate conversation-killer. The single-most terrifying idea known to man. And anyone who thinks otherwise hasn't thought about it enough.

Some, for example, reckon that oblivion is preferable to eternal mediocrity. I wholly disagree. Mediocrity means something, and something is at least something to work with. Others maintain that it doesn't really matter. If oblivion is a fact, the dead have no cause at all for concern because they're not there to be affected by it. From where I'm standing, this doesn't cut it for two reasons: (1) if I'm still alive, I have very good reasons for being so; and (2) I'm not dead yet. And until I am, contemplating the reality of oblivion means I have to contemplate the reality of everything I gain from being alive coming to a complete, utter, irrevocable end.

It also might be said that since death is inevitable, what's the point in worrying about it? But remember that I'm not talking about death here. What happens when one dies is inherently uncertain, and uncertainty is a thing I'm most certainly comfortable with. Here, I'm talking about oblivion.

So let's start this thing in earnest…

Oblivion is a fact.

A Cold. Hard. Fact.

When you die, that's fucking it.

Oblivion.

Nothing.

But nothing is still something, at least. No. It's not. It's just nothing. Maybe it's like thinking about eternity or the infinite? But it's not like that either. Because we can think of the latter as containing something. Compared to oblivion, the infinite is a Jack Russell.

So when you go to bed tonight (when it's apparently easier) try to imagine it. Try your utmost to conceive of it. Is it black? No. White? No. Transparent? No. Can I see anything? No. Hear anything? No. Can I feel or smell or taste or sense or think or remember anything? No. No. No. Fucking *NO*! You are nothing! Absolutely nothing! Your memories. Your thoughts. Your friends. Your family. Everything you've ever felt and tasted and enjoyed and hated. All of your experiences. All of it. Every last thing. Gone. Forever. Nothing. *Absolutely ... fucking ... nothing!*

Unnerved yet? Afraid at all? Head-fucked? If not, when you go to bed again, repeat said process. Repeat it and repeat it until you're so head-fucked you have to stop. Then, the night after, do it one more time. But this time, it's coming for you … Shadowing every footstep. Deadly. Quick. Remorseless. And inexorable…

If he thinks about it hard enough, it's enough to drive the thinker insane. He senses its approach. And each and every day, he feels it stealing closer … that cool, unfailing, indiscriminate assassin. The threat of oblivion makes a life more treasured. But it also makes it terrifying.

What if oblivion is a fact?

What's the fucking point, then? Why bother with all this stuff? All these people and society and the arms-race for riches and recognition and maintaining good health and deteriorating it and fighting and fucking and falling in love and being touched and touching someone else and pain and pleasure and the appreciation of beauty and the abhorrence of ugliness and the pursuit of happiness or contentment and the whole, uncanny, twisted joke of life? Why bother with it all? If it all amounts to nothing, why fucking bother?

So all that said, let's take things back to square one…

Think about it!

Really, *really* think about it!

What if we have *nothing* to worry about?

It's coming for you…

Any day now…

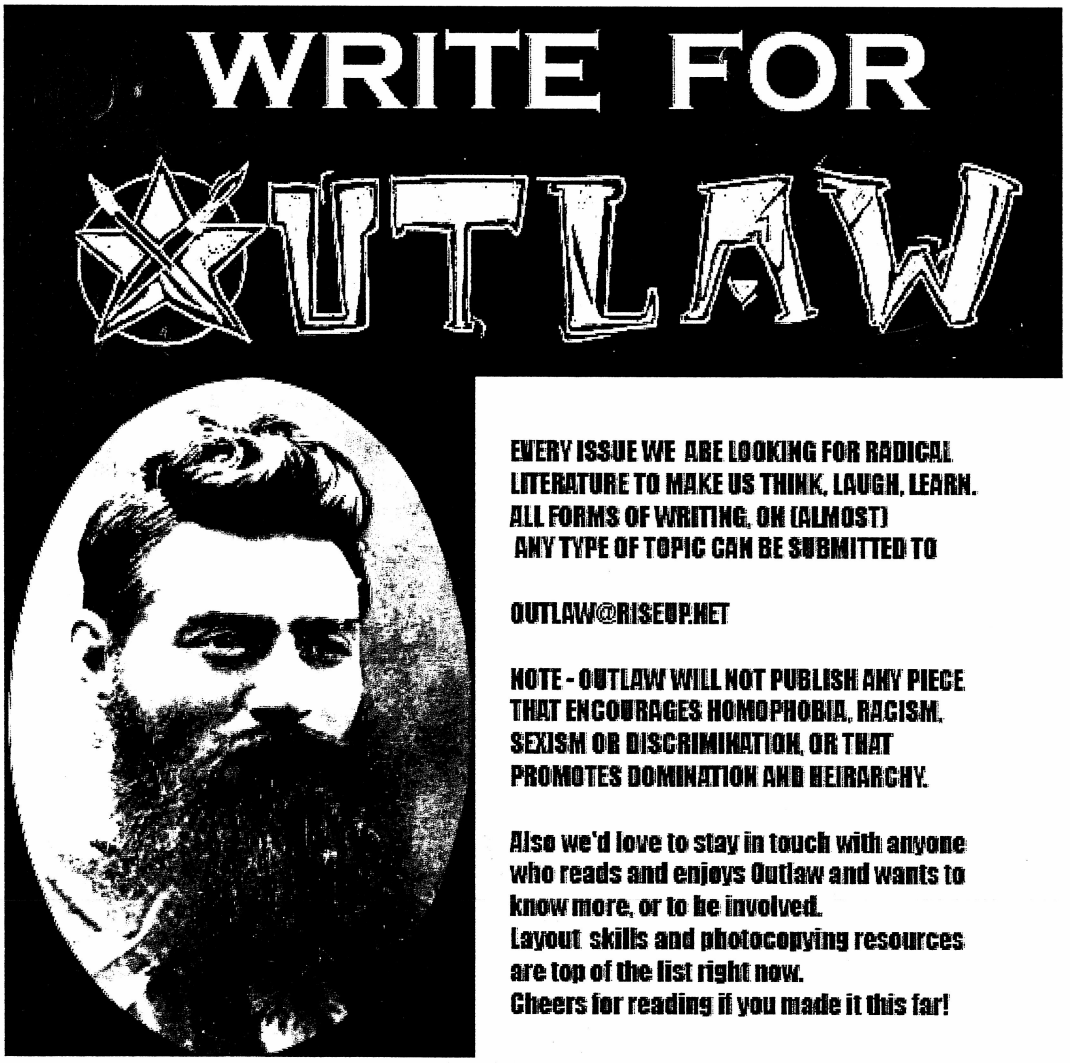
And you can do nothing about it.

Everything…

Gone…

Forever.

– N.B.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